Amendment to the claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1. (original): A method for preparing a tablet, comprising the steps of:

forming an aqueous slurry containing a mixture of microcrystalline cellulose in the form of a wet cake and silicon dioxide having a particle size from about 1 nm to about 100 μm;

drying said slurry to obtain an excipient comprising a plurality of agglomerated particles of microcrystalline cellulose in intimate association with said silicon dioxide, the amount of silicon dioxide being from about 0.1% to about 20% relative to the amount of microcrystalline cellulose, by weight;

mixing an active ingredient with said excipient in a ratio from about 1:99 to about 99:1 to obtain a mixture;

compressing said mixture into a tablet.

Claim 2. (original): The method of claim 1, wherein said silicon dioxide is colloidal silicon dioxide, and further comprising wet granulating said mixture prior to compressing said mixture into said tablet.

Claim 3. (canceled)

Claim 4. (original): The method of claim 1, wherein said drying is accomplished via spray drying such that the resultant excipient particles have an average particle size from about 30 μm to about 250 μm.

Claim 5. (original): The method of claim 1, wherein the resultant excipient particles have a bulk density from about 0.2 g/ml to about 0.6 g/ml.

Claim 6. (canceled)

Claim 7. (original): The method of claim 2, further comprising adding a further amount of said excipient to said wet granulated mixture, prior to compressing said mixture into a tablet.

Claim 8. (original): The method of claim 1, wherein said drying further comprises drying said slurry such that the resultant excipient particles have a moisture content of from about 0.5 to about 15%.

Claims 9. (original): The method of claim 1, wherein said drying further comprises drying said slurry such that the resultant excipient particles have a moisture content of from about 0.5 to about 2.5 %.

Claim 10. (original): The method of claim 1, wherein said drying further comprises drying said slurry such that the resultant excipient particles have a moisture content of from about 0.5 to about 1.8%.

Claim 11. (original): The method of claim 1, wherein said drying further comprises drying said slurry such that the resultant excipient particles have a moisture content of from about 0.8 to about 1.5%.

Claim 12. (original): The method of claim 1, wherein said drying further comprises drying said slurry such that the resultant excipient particles have a moisture content of from about 0.8 to about 1.2%.

Claim 13-38 (canceled)

Claim 39 (new): A method for preparing a tablet, comprising the steps of:
(a) forming an aqueous slurry of microcrystalline cellulose in the form of wet cake;
(b) forming an aqueous slurry of silicon dioxide having a particle size of from about 1 to about 100 μm;
(c) separately introducing said microcrystalline slurry and said silicon dioxide slurry separately into a drying apparatus for combination therein, to obtain an excipient comprising a plurality of

agglomerated particles of microcrystalline cellulose in intimate association with said silicon dioxide, the amount of silicon dioxide being from about 0.1% to about 20% relative to the amount of microcrystalline cellulose, by weight;

(d) mixing an active ingredient with said excipient in a ratio of from about 1:99 to about 99:1 to obtain a mixture;

(e) compressing said mixture into a tablet.

Claim 40 (new): The method of claim 39, wherein said silicon dioxide is colloidal silicon dioxide, and further comprising wet granulating said mixture prior to compressing said mixture into said tablet.

Claim 41 (new): The method of claim 39, wherein said drying is accomplished via spray drying such that the resultant excipient particles have an average particle size from about 10 μm to about 1,000 μm.

Claim 42 (new): The method of claim 39, wherein said drying is accomplished via spray drying such that the resultant excipient particles have an average particle size from about 30 μm to about 250 μm.

Claim 43 (new): The method of claim 39, wherein the resultant excipient particles have a bulk density from about 0.2 g/ml to about 0.6 g/ml.

Claim 44 (new): The method of claim 39, wherein the resultant excipient particles have a bulk density of from about 0.35 g/ml to about 0.55 g/ml.

Claim 45 (new): The method of claim 40, further comprising adding a further amount of said excipient to said wet granulated mixture, prior to compressing said mixture into a tablet.

Claim 46 (new): The method of claim 39, wherein said drying further comprises drying such that the resultant excipient particles have a moisture content of from about 0.5 to about 15%.

Claim 47 (new): The method of claim 39, wherein said drying further comprises drying such that the resultant excipient particles have a moisture content of from about 0.5 to about 2.5 %.

Claim 48 (new): The method of claim 39, wherein said drying further comprises drying such that the resultant excipient particles have a moisture content of from about 0.5 to about 1.8%.

Claim 49 (new): The method of claim 39, wherein said drying further comprises drying such that the resultant excipient particles have a moisture content of from about 0.8 to about 1.5%.

Claim 50 (new): The method of claim 39, wherein said drying further comprises drying such that the resultant excipient particles have a moisture content of from about 0.8 to about 1.2%.

Claim 51 (new): The method of claim 1, wherein said drying is accomplished via spray drying such that the resultant excipient particles have an average particle size from about 10 μm to about 1,000 μm.

Claim 52 (new): The method of claim 51, wherein the resultant excipient particles have a bulk density of from about 0.35 g/ml to about 0.55 g/ml.